

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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May 8 is Children's Mental Health Awareness Day

Lincoln—Over 45 percent of teens age 13-18 have experienced a mental health problem, and over 20 percent have experienced a severe disorder, according to the Division of Behavioral Health at the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.

"It's hard sometimes for parents to know if what they are seeing is normal behavior, a difficult moment, or something more unusual," said Scot L. Adams, director. "There are questions that every parent can ask themselves, if they want to know whether their child needs help."

Does my child...

- Often seem sad, tired, restless, or out of sorts?
- Spend a lot of time alone?
- Have low self-esteem?
- Have trouble getting along with family, friends and peers?
- Have frequent outbursts of shouting, complaining, or crying?
- Have trouble performing or behaving in school?
- Show sudden changes in eating patterns?
- Sleep too much or not enough?
- Have trouble paying attention or concentrating on tasks like homework?
- Seem to have lost interest in hobbies like music or sports?
- Show signs of using drugs and/or alcohol?
- Talk about death or suicide?

According to the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, if the answers to four or more of these questions is yes, and these behaviors last longer than two weeks, parents should consider getting professional help for their child.

Parents can contact the Nebraska Family Helpline, a free, confidential resource for parents who have questions regarding their child's behavior, 1-888-866-8660. Trained operators are available twenty-four hours a day, seven

days a week. They can assess immediate safety needs, identify the potential level of a behavioral health crisis, make recommendations or referrals to appropriate resources, and help callers connect to emergency resources or providers. The Helpline is supervised by licensed behavioral health professionals.

Parents can also use the [Nebraska Network of Care](#) to find local resources about behavioral health services.

"Being a teen can be tough," Adams said, "but especially so for kids with behavioral health challenges. Getting help can be the right decision."